

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: JULY 30, 2015

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS MERLINO
DICKINSON
CONOVER
WOOD
FRASIER

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

SUPERVISORS KENNY
VANSELOW

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:

PETER GIRARD, CREATIVE DIRECTOR
TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER
JOANNE CONLEY, ASSISTANT TOURISM COORDINATOR
LEISA GRANT, PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT CLERK

KEVIN B. GERAGHTY, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

SARAH MCLENITHAN, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD

FRANK E. THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER

SUPERVISORS BROCK

SEEBER

TAYLOR

MICHAEL CONSUELO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LAKE GEORGE REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

CHRISTINA CURLEY, SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR, LAKE GEORGE
REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

FRED AUSTIN, FORT WILLIAM HENRY

RICHARD CARLSON, THE GEORGIAN RESORT

KEVIN MARKHAM, RAMADA INN

FRANK DITTRICH, INN AT ERLOWEST/SUN CASTLE RESORT

LAURA KOHLS, CLARION INN & SUITES

DAVID KENNY, LAKE GEORGE BUSINESS OWNER

DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*

CHARLENE DIRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Merlino called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 10:10 a.m.

Motion was made by Ms. Wood, seconded by Mrs. Frasier and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Peter Girard, Creative Director, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.* At Mr. Merlino's request, Mr. Girard introduced himself as did the other staff members of the Tourism Department who were present, as follows:

- Peter Girard, Creative Director;
- Joanne Conley, Assistant Tourism Coordinator;
- Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter; and
- Leisa Grant, Principal Account Clerk/Festival Commons Coordinator.

Ms. Conley advised that they were moving along with the programs that were in place prior to the retirement of the prior Director of Tourism, Kate Johnson. She said the existing programs included the following: fall print advertisements that were designed by Mr. Girard; the 2015 Fall Brochure which would be distributed to their distribution locations and local businesses shortly so that they could encourage visitors to come back to the region during the fall season; fall television advertisements which would commence August 24-October 4, 2015 in their usual markets along

with the addition of the Syracuse and Eastern Pennsylvania markets; production of the winter placements which had just commenced; and transmittal of three emails blasts, two of which had already been scheduled. She stated the third email blast related to the Festival Commons site which had a full schedule of events for the month of August.

Ms. Conley apprised that she and Mr. Girard had captured images to use in their marketing campaign for 2016 while on a boat tour of Lake George last week. She mentioned it was essential for them to capture footage of the summer season to turn into images for use in next year's television advertisements and blog content. She reported last night, Mr. Girard and Ms. Brand had attended the Painted Pony Rodeo to gather some footage on the rodeo, as well as content from the Roaring Brook Ranch and Tennis Resort. She reported she had attended the Adirondack Challenge a few weeks ago with Mr. Merlino and a few of the other Supervisors. She commented it had been beneficial for her to meet with the State representatives and see how they were promoting all of the recreational activities available in the Adirondacks. She continued, she believed this had been an appropriate forum for the Tourism Department to showcase what Warren County had to offer. She remarked that she would be visiting the Lake George RV (Recreational Vehicle) Park with Mr. Girard next week to take some photos of camping, rv's and their new "bark park". She pointed out that camping was one area they would be focusing on, as it had previously been overlooked and was a vibrant sector of the tourism industry in the region. She added fishing was another area they planned to place more focus on. She apprised Mr. Girard would be providing more details about the recent activities of their department in his presentation. She commented she believed the Committee members would be impressed with the presentation that representatives from Trampoline Advertising and Design Co. would be providing to the Committee, as well.

In regards to the existing tasks that were on-going in their department, Mr. Girard stated they were so ingrained in them that they were able to complete them with relatively little effort; therefore he noted, there was no lapse of work going on. He mentioned they had taken advantage of this new opportunity to do things differently, incorporating new efforts such as meeting with the hoteliers, attractions, etc. to gather data, photos and videos to highlight on the County website and in television advertisements. He said the goal was to get out of the office at least one or two times a week to collect this information; he noted that in the past they had only been able to get out about four times a year. He commented this initiative had already started paying dividends, as there was fresh content on the County website, and they were also building up their library of photos and videos to ensure that next year's television advertisements would be completely different and hopefully much better.

Mr. Girard apprised that he would like to discuss the big changes that would be taking place in the department between now and the end of the year. He stated the department believed they needed the following four items:

- ▶ a new logo;
- ▶ a larger travel guide;
- ▶ a bigger winter brochure; and
- ▶ more email blasts.

Mr. Girard reported that these items had been brought to their attention through meetings with the area business owners and while they were out and about in the public. He presented a copy of the new logo that was developed, which was similar to the old logo but much more reflective of the region. He pointed out the new logo contained the same branding colors as the previous one to ensure it maintained the existing branding that they had been implementing; however, he opined, it was much easier to read and more reflective of the area.

Mr. Girard remarked that one of the main issues they dealt with was the large amount of money they expended on postage. He stated each year the size of the Travel Guide had been reduced to assist with the rising costs of postage. He pointed out that this resulted in certain areas, such as camping, being left out of the Guide. He said over the last four or five years they had been operating under the directive to decrease the size of the Travel Guide and supplementing it with other brochures. He pointed out the issue with this was that the cost to mail the supplemental brochure outweighed the savings achieved by reducing the size of the Travel Guide. He added only a small portion of the brochures mailed were representative of this area; therefore, he said, they were paying to mail someone else's advertisements which he believed was wasteful spending. He suggested that they increase the size of the Travel Guide, as it would allow them to market the area better, as well as decrease their costs in terms of the overall postage expense. He apprised when they disbursed the email blasts individuals would visit their website and request multiple brochures resulting in their department having to mail a packet of brochures which proved to be very costly. He stated in order to streamline the process and be more efficient they could combine all of the information into one piece that could be mailed. He reported this would not only save on postage expense, but would also provide the consumer with a better piece to travel with that highlighted more parts of the area while streamlining some information on the website. He mentioned expanding the Travel Guide would allow them to include all of this content in it.

In regards to the winter brochure, Mr. Girard apprised they would like to expand the content included in it, as well. He said the winter brochure had gradually been decreased in size over time to include a list of events, as well as a rolling list of all of the properties in this area. He remarked it did not market the area properly. He stated the department would like to expand the guide by adding a few pages to it which would increase the cost slightly; however, he advised, this increase would be offset by matching funds. He pointed out they could utilize the winter brochure to feature some of the popular activities available in the region such as skiing, snowmobiling, outdoor recreation, ice fishing, etc. He remarked that individuals interested in a winter activities tended to focus on one particular activity; therefore, he stated, an individuals concentration generally didn't stray to the other activities available. He reported they believed the best way to showcase what the region had to offer in terms of winter activities was to provide potential tourists with a substantial winter brochure that covered all areas. He pointed out it was imperative that they provide a listing of what businesses were open during the winter season in the brochure, as a number of them were closed during this time of year.

Mr. Girard remarked that those were the two major initiatives they were concentrating on with regards to the brochures. He commented that the department felt the aforementioned changes to the brochures would have a substantial impact in 2016, as well as provide them with a solid foundation to move forward with in 2017.

In conclusion, Mr. Girard reported that they had recently developed a system wherein he compiled the information contained in the email blasts and disbursed them. He pointed out they received a large amount of inquiries regarding the area following the transmittal of the unscheduled email blast on July 28th relating to the Festival Commons site. He mentioned email blasts could be utilized as a short term planning feature. As an example he stated an individual may have viewed the email blast regarding the Festival Commons site and discovered a concert was being offered there in two weeks that they would like to attend. He said this meant they had a short period of time to plan their trip to the area.

Frank Dittrich, representing the Inn at Erlowest/Sun Castle Resort, asked how the content on the County website differed from the brochure. Mr. Girard advised the website was much more robust

and up to date than what was included in the brochures. He remarked he understood printing brochures was a dwindling market; however, he noted, there were still a substantial amount of individuals that requested brochures, as supported by the fact they that ran out of the brochures every year before the end of the year. Mr. Dittrich questioned if a method was in place to track whether individuals requesting brochures actually visited the area and Mr. Girard responded that they had an on-going issue with tracking that dated back many years. He mentioned they had placed surveys online that they solicited responses to. He said this included questions such as "did you come here and what was your method of planning to come here", etc. Ms. Conley added they had been doing the conversion survey for about seven years now, twice a year. She said this was sent to the winter and May-October segment of people. She remarked that many individuals reported they were return visitors. She advised the results reinforced the activities of their department, the markets visitors were coming from, the age of the decision maker, the age of the travelers, etc. She commented she felt an area they could improve upon going forward was statistics.

Mr. Dittrich apprised the perspective of the Warren County Association of Lodging was that they were tracking the return on their investment in regards to advertising costs. As an example he stated they would modify their behavior over time if they spent \$3.65 on something which provided them with no return. He continued, if they received a number of reservations from an advertisement they spent \$3.65 on they would want to reinforce that since they received such a large return on investment from it.

Mr. Dickinson queried how they tracked whether they were getting results. In terms of the website, Mr. Dittrich apprised they were tracking how did individuals arrive at that website, how did they find them, did they use a tripadvisor.com etc. He remarked the third party booking sites provided them with great parameters, as well the as the dialogue with the guests when they checked in. He commented tracking this information was not easy; however, he added, it was beneficial to have, as it assisted with determining whether they were utilizing their resources efficiently to attract guests to the region. In conclusion he remarked he felt the efforts the Tourism Department was making for improvement were a step in the right direction moving forward.

David Kenny, Warren County business owner, apprised one of the most critical things for a business owner to be aware of was what was the cost of a customer and whether they could justify their expense to attract new ones. He said in order to manage a successful business it was necessary to have this information available to them. He suggested the Tourism Department explore what the value of their efforts were and Mr. Girard concurred. Mr. Girard explained he understood that more effort was needed to improve upon the efforts undertaken by their office; however, he noted, he believed the improvements they were making were a step in the right direction so they could have a better footing to move forward with in 2016.

Ms. Seeber questioned whether they were only sending guides to individuals who requested them rather than automatically delivering them to hotels or places where they ended up in the trash. Mr. Girard explained they utilized a distribution network. Ms. Conley added that the Travel Guides were disbursed to all of the Interstate rest stops, some of which they paid for this service, and others that had requested them on a regular basis, certain Triple AAA offices, etc. She noted they would not distributes boxes of the Guides to anyone that had not requested them. Mr. Girard pointed out these locations were evaluated on an annual basis to determine whether more or less brochures were required there. He stated the remaining Guides were mailed upon request of the individual. He indicated that there was no expense relating to printing the Travel Guide because of matching funds and revenue received for advertisements.

Ms. Seeber asked Mr. Girard to clarify what matching funds he referred to. Mr. Girard expounded that a matching grant was provided by New York State to distribute as the department desired. He mentioned by consolidating some of the Travel Guide content, more matching funds could be allocated to the larger guides. Ms. Seeber interjected her point was that matching funds were not "free money"; therefore, she stated, since they were unable to track the return they received from the Guides they should reconsider distributing less of them. In regards to the materials they printed, Ms. Seeber remarked she felt it was important to steer their business towards local companies. She mentioned she had been pleased that the social media contract had been awarded to Trampoline Advertising & Design Co., as they were based out of the City of Glens Falls. She said she had discussed the potential of joining the ARCC (Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce) to ensure the local printing companies were aware of the potential business they could receive from the department. She commented that while she was aware it was necessary to award the contracts to the lowest bidder, she felt educating the community regarding the bidding process may result in more bids being awarded to local companies. Mr. Girard interjected that he was fully supportive of working with local businesses; however, he noted, some of the issues with the printing industry in the area was although there were some large printing companies in the region, they did not have the tools required to perform web printing. He explained web printing was a completely different process that required different types of press machines that a number of local businesses did not have. Ms. Seeber requested that Mr. Girard work with the ARCC to determine who the local print companies were and to provide them with information necessary to ensure they were aware of the potential business with the County. In conclusion, Ms. Seeber inquired whether an update would be provided in regards to the Tourism Department's activities on social media, to which Mr. Girard replied representatives from Trampoline Advertising & Design Co. were in attendance today to provide an update on this.

Kevin Markham, representing the Ramada Inn, pointed out that the Wyndham Hotels and Resorts included banner advertisements in the blast emails they sent out that followed the individual who opened up the email for the next 30 days. As an example, he stated, if an individual was on the Yahoo website a banner ad for Wyndham would appear. He asked whether the email blasts the County transmitted were "re-targeting" as well, and Mr. Girard replied in the negative. He said they were re-targeting with some of their media buy with television; however, he noted, re-targeting through email blasts was an emerging technology that they should capitalize on. He noted they had just switched to a new software format that provided them with more capabilities in terms of the email blasts they were handling in-house. He indicated they were continuously making improvements to take advantage of the other marketing opportunities available, such as re-targeting with banner advertisements. Mr. Markham remarked he was aware they could utilize some of the matching funds for items such as this which were not inexpensive. He commented he believed it would be more resourceful for them to spend money on this rather than on printing advertisements such as the brochures.

Mr. Girard advised they were currently evaluating all of the activities of the department to determine which could be changed. He stated they had plenty of pull up displays and they had tabled some poster projects that did not have a solid purpose. He mentioned they were refocusing on doing less, tracking the impact and evaluating whether it was worthwhile to continue to do or shift the focus elsewhere. He said his goal was to evaluate some programs in order to ensure they had a solid foundation going forward into 2016. He pointed out changes could not be made to the fall brochure and television advertisements, as they had already been completed for this year; however, they were actively reviewing anything that could be changed. He mentioned the re-targeting they did through their media buy had proven useful to them.

Proceeding with the agenda review, Mr. Girard advised that representatives from Trampoline Advertising & Design Co. were in attendance to provide an update on their activities relating to their contract with the County for social media advertising. He noted they had been slow to utilize the social media sites Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. He said they were able to get 6,000 likes on their Facebook page over a five-year period but it had been difficult to dedicate the resources internally to get into that platform, as it required an immense amount of attention and manpower they did not have. He apprised Trampoline Advertising & Design Co. would be providing a synopsis of their activities since they had taken over social media advertising for the County two months ago.

Mr. Girard introduced Amanda Magee and Cara Greenslade, of Trampoline Advertising & Design Co., who provided a Power Point Presentation to the Committee members, as well as a list of the events they planned to cover over the next few months; *a copy of the Power Point presentation and list of events they would be covering are on file with the minutes.* Ms. Magee pointed out that events could be added to the list they planned on covering, as it was just being used as starting point for them. She said they commenced work on the contract two weeks in advance of the commencement date to allow them to get a sense of what had been done, what accounts currently existed, how to unify the appearance of each of the accounts, etc. She noted the sites did not include the new logo yet; however, she said, they had created icons for Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest so that there would be a unified appearance. She apprised she had worked with the Tourism Department on selecting the hashtag “#vacationeer”. She mentioned their approach commenced with building a foundation, as it was unrealistic to have the expectation of gathering a large increase of followers in the first few months. She indicated they had been searching for other users in the area.

In regards to the map of Warren County and the activity on social media, Ms. Magee apprised it was inconsistent with varying levels of participation in the towns. She stated this meant if they promoted an event in Chestertown, they may not get a large amount of local shares. She equated this to the following: they had not located the local participants; the participants had not located the event; and they were not located there. She remarked in regards to print, she felt they should keep in mind there were still individuals who preferred printed materials over other marketing methods.

Ms. Magee reported they had discovered there were social media accounts particularly in Lake George that regularly shared information on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. She pointed out a social media marketer could only be as good as the people locally who were helped carry the message which was similar to word of mouth. She stated they had been actively pursuing local accounts to connect with, as well as ones from outside of the area. In regards to the activity on Facebook, she said the activity had increased significantly, as they were up to about 7,900 page likes as of today. She noted there was an abundant amount of activity in terms of paid initiatives, which was not something their office was doing. She said their post from Sunday that was of one of the steamboats around sunset during a storm had received about 105 organic (non-paid) shares thus far. She commented she thought this was a remarkable achievement for them to have not paid for the post and had that many individuals share the post with their followers. She stated this supported the fact that individuals cared more about promoting what they loved about the area than promoting events. She said no matter what they did they could not stray from the fact that individuals preferred to share photos of someone on a mountain bike, a blue herring in Paradise Bay, a photo of the water, etc. She apprised that the photos and Go Pro footage they took of the Glens Falls Downtown Criterium Cycling Race on July 16th garnered a positive response from their followers. She pointed out since it had been a number of years since the last time this event took place here, the organizers had not done a stellar job promoting it. She remarked they had received positive feedback of their footage of the King George Derby. She apprised one of their goals had been to capture footage of people and moments that were occurring and connect them with a bigger

picture. She noted right now in social media there was a swell of appreciation and focus on campaigns such as "Like a Girl"; therefore, she apprised, it was necessary to highlight that a young girl participated in a very non-traditional activity for a girl. She indicated their goal was to continue to discover ways such as this that repositioned Lake George and the surrounding areas to individuals who may not have otherwise considered it. She continued, this was how the additional layer of marketing and outreach could enhance, support and grow interest, awareness and hopefully hotel bookings.

Ms. Magee indicated the organic versus paid advertisement on Facebook would be increasingly challenging, as Facebook identified organizations, companies and events that would benefit from paid advertising by diminishing their appearance in the algorithm until you paid. She emphasized the importance of being selective about promoting paid things they knew would be well received, such as the photo of the steamboat and a child on top of Prospect Mountain with a grandparent, as these were items that were compelling and had the chance of taking off. She mentioned they had conveyed their belief to the Tourism Department that the budget should include funding set aside for paid advertisements on Facebook. She noted they would not make any money on this; however, she stated, it would provide them with better tools to produce more of an impact. Mr. Girard interjected that they were currently working on this to ensure they provided Trampoline Advertising & Design Co. with the resources they needed to have more of an impact.

Mr. Dittrich asked whether a dollar amount was available in terms of paid advertising on Facebook, to which Ms. Magee responded that she had not paid for any posts. She explained there were different agencies that were working on elements of Warren County. She noted with permission she paid to assist with the promotion of the Aaron Lewis concert at the Festival Commons which had relatively low ticket sales. Ms. Conley interjected that the Advertisers Workshop had paid for some advertisements relative to factory outlet shopping to attract the Canadian market. Ms. Magee commented it may be interesting to relate the amount of funding spent to the rate of return in terms of interest here. She remarked their charts indicated when individuals paid to boost a post more people saw it which caused the likes to increase. She stated it was necessary to develop a relationship between the amount of money spent, the topic it was spent on and the result. Ms. Magee apprised one of the things individuals disliked was when they realized someone was paying to promote something. She mentioned she believed the way this was being carried out was through people that did not already like Lake George on Facebook. She remarked she was amazed that up to 15 people a day were posting the photo of the outlets with a sign advertising up to 70% off. Laura Kohls, representing Clarion Inn & Suites, stated this meant there was no way for them to determine what the return on investment was for this particular advertisement since it was not placed by Trampoline Advertising & Design Co. Ms. Magee advised she would never be able to tell specifics about individuals that liked a post, such as whether that person went into the Sketchers outlet to purchase a pair of shoes. Ms. Kohl interjected her point was that since Trampoline Advertising & Design Co. did not pay for the advertisement there was no way for them to determine how much money was expended to drive the number of likes up to 10,000.

Mr. Girard apprised their department had an idea because there were two companies managing some of their stuff. He said Adworkshop Integrated Marketing ran some targeted Facebook pre-roll advertisements and blanket promotions to the Canadian market. He said there were no definitive figures available at this time but they would be made available to the County at some point in the future.

In regards to Twitter, Ms. Magee advised this was not a platform that was very popular in the County yet, but said they were connecting with the people who were on it. She pointed out they

were trying to draw a connection between Rachel Ray and this area, as she did have a link to this area. She stated they had commenced participating in travel chats and seven of the tweets they sent out were re-tweeted by Travel & Leisure Magazine which had about 1.7 million followers. She explained in this particular travel chat they were asking how to maximize people's enjoyment of visit. She continued, although they were not travel planners they thought being representative of the County they would assume a certain personality and flexibility of all the merchants, shopkeepers and hotels. She advised their tweet stressed flexibility, customization and multi-generational interest. She remarked it had been very gratifying to know the message that Lake George area businesses would take extra pains to make your visit wonderful was heard and promoted to Travel & Leisure's followers, as she was aware they were very selective of which responses they re-tweeted.

Another connection they made on Twitter, Ms. Magee indicated was with the "We Travel the World Blog". She said the women who managed the blog had learned to swim in a lake located in Fulton County and started engaging with them. She noted there were over 1 million followers of this blog. On a smaller level, she apprised when the Triathlon was taking place they promoted it. She mentioned this assisted with connecting the area with these elite athletes.

In regards to Instagram, Ms. Magee said they had been incorporating video of the Wine and Food Festival, underwater video taken off Long Island in Lake George, boat wake shots and happy children playing. She said the videos could be up to 15 seconds. She mentioned they were trying to incorporate the logo where they could. She remarked Instagram allowed for a lot of niche courting such as fishing, people who love lake life, people who like video taken with Go Pro cameras, and etc. She advised they discovered people were either citing their account name or using the #vacationer hashtag. She apprised a well received photo they used on Instagram was provided by The Pink Roof Ice Cream. She added footage they took from a golf cart on Cronin's Golf Course was used, as well. She stated that the owner of the golf course indicated he was pleased with the improvements the Tourism Department made over the last few years to market the area, because it made businesses feel they were being supported by the County in new ways.

Mr. Girard interjected that the tasks carried out by Trampoline Advertising & Design Co. were a lot more fun than numbers and charts. He said the nine employees of Trampoline were all very diverse, interesting individuals that were local. He apprised their staff consisted of women who liked to shop, a savvy outdoorsman and people that were interested in drama and theatre. He said all of this coincided with the great activities available in the region. He mentioned the event sheet they passed around consisted of one month of events they would be attending. He remarked all of this had taken place over the last two months since they were awarded the contract. He pointed out they were doing a great job capturing events throughout the County, as they attended and promoted events all over the region, not just in the Lake George area.

Mr. Girard reported one of their new initiatives was to foster the growth of new events. He commented as new events grew they brought with them new people to get bigger and better. He explained the way it worked was they reached out to the captive audience on Facebook a few days before an event to notify them of what was going on and telling them to check it out. Next, he said, they attended the event, took pictures and video and posted it live while they were at the event. In the case of the Wine and Food Festival, he said they had actually taken video footage of a few different things and then edited it for a YouTube clip that was posted the same day so that it would have some visual impact for the following day. He remarked the event organizer was very pleased with the attention it had gathered for their event. He indicated this set the stage for the event the following year, as they had video they could use to promote the event next year. He pointed out

they were doing this for a number of events scheduled over the next month. He added they were flexible enough with their schedule to adjust it if necessary to attend other events that were not on the schedule, if requested. He reiterated they were capitalizing on the diversity of their office employees which meant they could all speak to the language of their particular interest. He commented he felt the presence at these events and the interaction with the community assisted in alleviating some of the stigma of the Tourism Department being walled into this building.

In regards to outreach, Mr. Girard apprised that participating in events they were promoting, as well as feedback from other individuals managing or participating, was an integral process. He mentioned due to their department being short staffed it was difficult for them to carry out everything that was expected of them. He remarked the contract with Trampoline alleviated that, while promoting the area and collecting assets such as the video footage.

Ms. Kohls commented that she had been unable to locate the County's account names on either Facebook or Twitter. She suggested they send out an email blast with this information so they could interconnect with the other businesses to grow it. Mr. Girard mentioned there were individuals who had ideas they could potentially work with at no additional cost; for example, he advised Ms Kohl's suggestion could be implemented easily and at no cost. He advised this went along with the department's new position of being open and receptive to ideas that made sense to implement. Ms. Conley interjected that the account name for all sites was "lakegeorgearea". Mr. Girard pointed out there could be others searching for this information as well; therefore, he stated, it made sense to send an email blast containing this information.

Mr. Conover pointed out there may be more optimal times to notify individuals of events. For example, he cited that for a wine and cheese event, it was more practical to send an email blast about this during the summertime, rather than in November. Mr. Girard mentioned with different platforms there were different "optimum times". He said Facebook and Twitter were used for events taking place now or this upcoming weekend whereas email blasts could be used for events occurring within a two week time period so individuals could do some short term planning. He stated their print publications and web content were ongoing so individuals could pull up events taking place in 2017. He commented the contract with Trampoline was geared towards immediate gratification which was what the bulk of individuals seemed to be shifting towards.

Richard Carlson, representing the Georgian Resort, questioned where the content was on what was occurring in Lake George right now, as he provided this information to guests of his resort every single day in the form of a newsletter. He remarked the events of Lake George needed to be publicized much better than they were, as they were currently grouped with events throughout the County. He pointed out John Warren had a show on North County Public Radio entitled "outdoor conditions for the Adirondacks". He suggested introducing something entitled "This Week In Lake George", as he felt radio reached out to a broad audience. Mr. Girard interjected there were a few things that prevented them from advertising on the radio, such as an older policy for their department that forbid them from doing so. He said they may need to revisit this policy, as he was unsure why it was in place. He added the Tourism Department Budget had been allocated for the remainder of the year which limited their efforts. Mr. Carlson pointed out there was no reference to the events taking place this week on the visitlakegeorge.com website. He commented he believed there should be a large banner on the home page of the site advising of all of the events going on in Lake George for that particular week. Mr. Girard interjected that they provided a rolling list of the next events coming up; however, he remarked, there was certainly value in placing the list at the top of the page. Mr. Carlson advised he did not think government agencies such as I Love New York had even come close to providing the information individuals wanted such as outdoor recreation,

hiking, fishing and so forth. He stated it was difficult to locate good, accurate information. He suggested the Tourism Department increase their content, stop printing the Travel Guide and mail a large post card with all of the information instead, as he felt individuals were more likely to review the content on a post card than in the guides. Mr. Girard pointed out they were still receiving requests for the Travel Guide. He apprised he was open to the ideas that were brought forth today, as he believed one of the things the department was lacking was input from the business community.

Mr. Carlson advised his last suggestion was to review the tourism industry in other areas to see if there were things that could be incorporated here to make it more successful. Mr. Girard stated that during his tenure with the Tourism Department they had modeled their website after on in Maine, as the tourism industry there seemed to be doing very well. He pointed out it had been suggested to them that they model their department after the one in Hershey, Pennsylvania, as it was a more apt market to be copying. He said since that suggestion was brought to their attention they had been reviewing the type of promotion taking place there and getting it into play. He noted although they were making improvements he wanted everyone to be aware that it was a slow moving process to ensure the changes they made were for the better of the department. He pointed out making the wrong move could have a profound impact on their department. He stated they had attended a number of meetings and heard the concerns of the lodging properties, attraction owners, campsite owners, etc. and were reviewing them to determine which ones would work best for their department.

Mr. Kenny asked whether the amount of revenue they received from the advertisements placed in the Travel Guide was impacting their decision to continue printing them and Mr. Girard replied in the negative. He explained that a very minuscule amount of revenue was received for placing advertisements in the Guide. Mr. Kenny remarked rather than concerning themselves with the revenue generated from the Guide they should be concentrating on the best practices to attract more tourists to the region which in turn would generate additional revenue for the Tourism Department to utilize in promoting the area. Mr. Girard commented that he did not believe the Travel Guide had any impact on their department's budget. He explained that if they utilized matching funds to offset the increase in price for printing a larger brochure with more content they could increase the number of advertisements, as well as reduce the cost for businesses to place advertisements in the Guide. Mr. Kenny stated he would be unable to determine whether this was a step in the right direction for the Tourism Department without being provided with the return on the investment. He mentioned he felt a number of businesses were placing advertisements in it because they felt they had to since a competitor had placed one too. Mr. Kenny apprised in order for a business to be a success it was imperative to watch their return on investment. He indicated it was costing business owners money to place advertisements in the guide and they had no way to determine whether there was a return on investment from this. He said he did not feel much business was generated from this.

Mr. Merlino stated that it was necessary to move the conversation along. He said as time went by they hoped to make improvements and put into place a number of the suggestions that had been made.

Ms. Magee advised that their business required input from others. She stated Pinterest was another platform they were working on a blog for and she asked Ms. Greenslade report on their activities in this regard. Ms. Greenslade apprised that Pinterest was an online platform that could be utilized as a tool for individuals to plan their vacations. She said individuals could pin photos of Lake George and other attractions to their board to assist them with the preliminary planning for activities while

they were on vacation. She stated the difference between Pinterest and the other social media accounts was the even the non-followers could see all of your pins; therefore, she said, individuals could re-pin your posts even if they were not following you. She advised she had been pinning items from the blog, Facebook and Instagram. She remarked it was providing the Lake George area its own personality via pictures and links to all these sites.

Mr. Dittrich questioned what the cross usage between the different sites and all the different content they were collecting to which Ms. Magee responded they did not like to duplicate the content in case someone was following more than one site. She said if they placed a photo on Facebook they would put a different caption and filter on Instagram if they decided to place it on both sites, as they did not want individuals to assume they were lazy and did not care about their experience.

In regards to The Americade, Ms. Magee apprised they had created maps that could be used for the motorcyclists as well as mountain bikers that displayed the towns you could visit in a one hour loop on a motorcycle throughout Warren County. She stated they tested this out on the back of a bike to ensure they were providing individuals with an accurate experience. She indicated the content would be good for the next ten years. She added they hoped to be able to do this with other experiences. She said Ms. Greenslade was working on other things for the blog such as a day around Lake George for under \$50, a day on Lake George with no kids, etc. She mentioned providing this information to individuals assisted them in determining the estimated cost of their outing. She remarked their vision was to eventually have this information provided in the voice of guests, rather than the voice of the County. She noted they were making every effort to ensure that areas other than Lake George were featured. She pointed out Perky Granger, an author from the Town of Thurman, was very active on Twitter; she said if each town had a person such as this who was active on social media platforms, they could work with them. Additionally, she indicated if the towns forwarded her a list of events occurring in their municipality they could include them on the round ups they did on Facebook to encourage people to attend. She commented that individuals liked their feeds to be what they wanted to hear; therefore, she stated, if they felt like they were being told they were missing out they would stop following. She reported it was important for them to be sensitive to people so they continued to like their page. She pointed out having four platforms plus the blog allowed them the flexibility to configure the platforms to their followers likes. She noted they provided a women who had not visited the area in a number of years and was returning with her teenage children with a list of stuff to do. She added they also had fielded a complaint from a women from Quebec, Canada that had been on the beach in Lake George the day that a thunderstorm occurred and the beach was closed. She continued, this women felt insulted when the lifeguards "high fived" each other after the beach was closed. She responded to this women that she was pleased the staff was keeping her safe; however, she said, she was sorry she felt insulted and if she was staying a few more days to please reach out to them to let them know what they could do to make her experience a more pleasurable one. She stated they never got a response from the woman, but noted the response was sent within five minutes of receiving the complaint about a bad experience in Lake George. She surmised that while this woman may not return, it was important she was aware that there were people who cared about her bad experience and wanted to make it better.

Mr. Dittrich said it would be helpful to determine who the anonymous source was on Tripadvisor.com that answered the posts on behalf of the area. He mentioned he did not think anyone was aware of who this was but noted their responses appeared to be very official.

In conclusion of the Trampoline presentation, Ms. Magee advised their contact information was on the back of the packet they passed out. She encouraged the Committee members to contact them

with any questions or concerns they may have regarding the County's social media accounts. Mr. Merlino added he believed the number of followers would be increasing substantially over the next few months, as they had garnered an impressive amount in the month since they had commenced working on it. He remarked that he was appreciative of all their efforts.

Commencing the review of the Action Agenda/New Business portion of the agenda, Mr. Merlino presented a request to award bid and authorize contract with Courier Printing Corp. for an amount not to exceed \$2,973 to print 3,000 copies of the 2016 Warren County Group Travel Planner during the term commencing September 25, 2015 and terminating October 31, 2015.

Motion was made by Ms. Wood, seconded by Mrs. Frasier and carried unanimously to approve the request as presented and the necessary resolution was authorized for the August 21st Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Next, Mr. Merlino requested authorization for a new contract with Trampoline Design, LLC to provide boosting initiatives in conjunction with the social media contract for an annual amount of \$7,000 (\$3,500 for the remainder of 2015) for a term commencing August 24, 2015 and terminating December 31, 2015 with the option to renew for three additional one-year terms.

Mr. Dickinson asked for clarification on the cost of the contract, to which Ms. Grant replied it was \$7,000 on an annual basis; however, she noted, the cost to cover the remainder of this year was \$3,500.

Motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, seconded by Mrs. Frasier and carried unanimously to approve the request as presented and the necessary resolution was authorized for the August 21st Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Merlino requested to amend Resolution No. 324 of 2013 to extend the expiration date of the contract with the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce for improvements to the physical plant and operations of Exit 17 Information Center from May 31, 2015 to July 31, 2015.

Motion was made by Mr. Conover, seconded by Mr. Dickinson to approve the request as presented and the necessary resolution was authorized for the August 21st Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Concluding the agenda review with pending items, Mr. Merlino advised they had decided to leave the Tourism Director position vacant for the remainder of the year. He said he believed they would include a salary for the position in the 2016 Budget.

Mr. Dickinson questioned whether they were still going to pursue an RFP (request for proposal) for a consulting firm to review the activities of the department and what changes and/or improvements could be made to attract more visitors to the County. Mr. Merlino advised that this related solely to the Director of Tourism position remaining vacant. Mr. Dickinson pointed out the agenda listed the Tourism Director and RFP on the same pending item. Mr. Merlino interjected that the consulting firm was a separate matter that would be discussed. It was the consensus of the Committee that these items should be separated for consideration as two independent pending items in the future.

In regards to the consulting firm, Mr. Merlino apprised that he and the Tourism Department staff had met with 32 business owners in Lake George. He continued, the vast majority of business owners expressed their desire to have a consulting firm in place to review the current duties of the

Tourism Department. He mentioned the business owners had agreed to provide the County with a few names of firms that provided services such as this; however, he noted, it would be necessary to develop an RFP. He advised he was seeking the opinion of the Committee as to whether they should move forward with this or hold off on it for awhile.

Mr. Dickinson remarked he would like to move forward with the RFP now, as they needed to hire a consulting firm and develop expectations for the firm that was hired. He commented he would like to start on the process as soon as possible. Mr. Merlino apprised it was necessary to determine what they needed the consulting firm to review so they could work with the Julie Butler, County Purchasing Agent, on developing an RFP to send out. Mr. Dickinson suggested a meeting be scheduled which local business owners could attend to provide their input on this matter, as well. Mr. Merlino queried which of the following options would be the easiest to carry out: 1) providing the business owners with two weeks to come up with a list of suggestions from each group; or 2) holding a meeting of a group of business owners to develop ideas for the Committee to review and discuss which they felt would be beneficial. Mr. Dickinson commented he thought it made the most sense for the business owners to meet and develop a list of their concerns, as he felt this would be beneficial to the process.

Mr. Dittrich advised that, as discussed in the meeting last week with the Warren County Lodging Association, they would be happy to come up with a list of possible consulting firms that the Committee could consider for an RFP. He said there was an existing list with five companies they had been able to locate thus far. He mentioned there was a rather wide spectrum to choose from in terms of ability which he believed to be positive. In reference to the scope of work, Mr. Dittrich stated that the Warren County Association for Lodging had a product that needed to be refined some before they could present it to the Committee. He said he felt the details could be reduced to a few statements for the purposes of an RFP. He apprised they were open to meeting with the County as early as next week for the purpose of working on developing a scope of work for the RFP.

Ms. Wood remarked that she had initially been supportive of the RFP; however, she noted, at this point her comfort level had diminished rapidly. She said she was deeply concerned about the fact that it appeared the RFP was only representative of Lake George and its surrounding areas. She suggested the Committee consult with some of the other lodging establishments outside of the Lake George area. She pointed out it appeared only Lake George was being represented; therefore, she said, she would like to ensure input was sought from other areas of the County, as well. She noted she was not debating that Lake George made up the bulk of the tourism industry for the County; however, she apprised, it was not the only aspect of the County. She commented she believed it was imperative to review some of the other areas of the County, as well.

Mr. Dittrich interjected that he was a representative of the Warren County Lodging Association which included membership outside of Lake George. He pointed out their organization represented 80% of the occupancy tax collected in the County today. He remarked from their Associations perspective the intent was for the RFP to be representative of all of Warren County. Ms. Wood indicated that there were more aspects to Warren County than just from the lodging perspective; therefore, she stated, she would like to see some additional involvement. She pointed out the Town of Thurman did not have an abundant amount of lodging available but they had an exceptionally active community with a number of events going on. She added representatives from her town had worked quite a bit on the events going on there with the Tourism Department. She reiterated the importance of Committee reviewing all aspects.

Mr. Merlino commented that they were working with a number of organizations on the RFP, all of

which were not from the Lake George area nor were they all in the hotel industry. Ms. Wood remarked her concern was they were focusing very heavily on the hotel aspect, while tourism related to many other aspects than just hotels. She advised she was under the assumption that the consultant would be reviewing more than just how the Tourism Department responded to the needs of the hotels in the region, as there were many other aspects that needed to be reviewed as well such as group tours. Mr. Merlino indicated this was why they would review the ideas presented from the business community to determine what additional items should be included on the RFP. He stated the goal was to promote the entire County.

Mr. Markham mentioned that they were not necessarily concerned with the Tourism Department, as their main concern was with the tourism industry in the County. Ms. Wood stated her concern was that the County as a whole did not have continuous internet access nor cell phone coverage. She pointed out that terminating the printing of the Travel Guide would not work in her community, as visitors to Thurman would not be able to access the internet to look up the information contained on the website since there was no coverage there. She said if they took the Travel Guide with them they would have access to information they could use during their visit, but reiterated that access by phone or computer could not be relied upon in all areas. She added her concern was she was not hearing a balance here today. Mr. Markham commented his understanding was that the concern was more with the money spent on the Guide. Mr. Kenny apprised he would hope the consultant chosen would include in their survey that the lack of cell phone and internet access in the Town of Thurman.

Ms. Conley apprised historically the Tourism Department had gone to great lengths to promote beyond the Lake George area so that when individuals came to Warren County they visited several parts of the region. She commented they were well aware of the value of getting people out and about throughout the County. Ms. Wood acknowledged her awareness of these efforts.

Mr. Merlino advised the next meeting of the Committee would be scheduled for Thursday, August 6th at 10:00 a.m. to further discuss the RFP with a few of the representatives from the business community. He said following that meeting they would analyze the input provided to develop a proposal to be discussed at a Committee meeting later this month.

Mr. Conover interjected he thought there should be a very specific purpose for the meeting. He said the purpose of the meeting should be to solicit input for how they could improve upon the advertising and promotional efforts the Tourism Department, as he felt this could take a considerable amount of time. He remarked he was unsure whether they should expand upon this even more at this stage. He pointed out one's view was dependent upon who they were talking to and whether the person they were talking to was in Thurman, Lake George, Bolton, etc. He welcomed all input but noted it was important to focus on what they were trying to improve upon. He noted there was an abundant amount of things that could be analyzed such as the background and expertise of the staff, promotional advertising, etc. He indicated he would be happy to attend next week's meeting; however, he added, some sort of focus should be developed so they were as productive as possible with their time. He commented he did not feel it was realistic to state they would be bringing in a consultant that was an expert in all areas. He continued, in the end the Committee members as elective officials were the decision makers. He reiterated he was willing to participate in the process but felt it was necessary to determine a focus of what they would be meeting about and what their expectations were of the consultant.

Mr. Merlino remarked the purpose of contracting with a consultant was not to judge the Tourism Department but rather to assist with determining where improvements could be made moving forward. He said it was necessary to establish a guideline of what they wanted the consultant to

review. He mentioned he did not agree with utilizing a consultant from out of the area, as they would not be familiar with the region; however, he stated, it was necessary for them to seek assistance in determining whether the Tourism Department was moving in the right direction or not. He pointed out the Committee could make changes to any of the recommendations the consultant had. He reiterated the consultant would not be evaluating the employees of the department. Mr. Conover commented that this had been his point, as he believed it was necessary to have a much more specific focus such, as Mr. Merlino had stated, in seeking an evaluation of the efforts of the Tourism Department and how to improve upon them. He indicated this would assist them with their tasking in resource allocation going forward.

Mr. Carlson apprised he would like to use a quote from the 2010 Warren County Tourism study that stated the following: "The County has all the requisites to increase market share and economic impact and be a leading destination in the northeast. This potential however may be hammered by the current organization for tourism development, the lack of strategic plan, poor tracking of data and performance of the industry and the lack of consensus on how the industry resources are used to increase visitation and attend economic impact". He pointed out the County had \$3 million in occupancy tax funding to utilize for tourism promotion. He mentioned he believed this was what the consultant should review and then present a better opportunity for distribution to increase tourism and promotion in Warren County. He stated it was possible the consultant would think the County was doing a good job and concur with what everyone is doing.

Mr. Merlino interjected that they had worked as a team to develop a new impact statement on tourism. He mentioned he was not interested in what happened in 2010, as he was focusing on what was occurring now and how they were going to move forward. He advised from his point of view as someone who had been a small business owner in the tourism industry for many years the County had done a respectable job in attracting tourism to the area. He pointed out a family could stay in Warren County for a month and not do the same activity twice, as there was an abundant amount of activities and attractions in the region which continued to grow each year. He apprised the comments now would be much different than they were in 2010 if the same firm were to return today and complete another study. He asked everyone to give them a chance, as they continued to work on making improvements. He noted they had made a number of large changes within the last six weeks and would continue to do so moving forward.

Ms. Brand advised there were 41 advertisers in the Group Travel Planner for 2016, which was a substantial increase from the prior year. She noted she was pleased to report that 9 of the 41 advertisers were new. She stated they planned on making some changes to the itinerary section of the planner to include solid itineraries that had solid focuses for some of the top attractions in the region that were group friendly. She said she needed to ensure the Guide included attractions that met motorcoach guidelines; therefore, she apprised, she felt the new itineraries would be more effective as far as selling the area to tour operators. In regards to the 2015 Destinations Familiarization Tour, she reported that there were currently 40 domestic and international tour operators registered to participate. She said they were working on customizing itineraries for 7 group leader companies; therefore, she stated, she was exerting a lot of effort in organizing this. She noted she attended a China Ready Workshop at the Tupper Lake Wild Center which provided some ideas about what the Chinese tourists were seeking in regards to tours and tourism. She mentioned now that she had Tupper Lake and some other attractions and lodging partners on board with the Chinese tourist market she could commence working on building some itineraries with a representative of the Tupper Lake Wild Center. She indicated that this was fully supported by the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council. She reported one of her initiatives in 2016 would be to do some more outreach to the outlet shopping market, as it would be growing immensely within the

next few years.

Michael Consuelo, Executive Director, Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & Convention & Visitors Bureau, stated he would like to officially welcome back from medical leave Christina Curley, Special Events Coordinator, Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & Convention & Visitors Bureau. He said they were pleased to have her back in the realm of activity. He congratulated the Tourism Department on all of their efforts these past few weeks. He advised he was pleased that Mr. Girard had taken the initiative to send out an email blast on all the activities taking place on the Festival Commons site. He apprised there were some concerns with the Festival Commons website that needed to be addressed such as the fact that it was practical for one person to be responsible for the website, which he would be discussing with the Park Operations & Management Committee. Relative to the Guide, he stated there may be an opportunity in the future to discuss the possibility of combining the Chamber's guide book with the County's. He noted although print was not used as readily as before, it was still in use. He mentioned that Ms. Curley met with the Lodging and Attraction partners of the CVB on a monthly basis. He suggested that the Tourism Department attend these meetings to gather more information. He pointed out they had obtained \$1 million through Senator Little's Office for some improvements to the Exit 17 rest area. He apprised the funding allocated from the County for improvements to the rest area would assist with improving upon it that much more as it welcomed more travels to the area. He stated it was a good place for travels and stop, as well as a good way for their organization to promote the region.

Ms. Curley thanked the Committee for their continued support and apprised she was pleased to be back to work. She distributed copies of her July 2015 Monthly Report to the Committee members and proceeded with a brief outline of same; *a copy of the report is on file with the minutes*. She advised she had signed up for the Small Market Meetings, which was a trade show that would be taking place at the end of September. She said she had picked up where she left off and encouraged the Committee members to contact her with any questions they may have.

Mr. D. Kenny stated the following: "My name is David Kenny and I have been a business owner for over 38 years. I would like to make a personal statement reflecting my views and not necessarily the views of the Warren County Lodging Association. Like the other hospitality owners in the area we are very busy at this time of the year. This was very important to me, I felt I needed to take time to be here today. I attended a Lodging Association meeting last week which was attended by a number of Supervisors. I was disheartened to hear some of the comments at the meeting such as STR data does not make sense and we are not sure how valid it is. Another Supervisor commented the occupancy tax money should go back to the communities that generate the occupancy tax revenue. Another commented that the allocation of occupancy tax is very political. All of these make no sense to me. Another Supervisor commented that he is not involved in the tourism industry and does not have the personal knowledge pointing to a need for a study. That Supervisor I can admire for making that kind of statement. I own and am involved in a number of properties as you know. I would like to share some current information from one of his properties today. Our occupancy for July is down 3% with fewer tourists in Warren County. I have the facts and keep very accurate records and I will share them with anybody. The room rates we are charging for the month are up 2% and our revenue is flat but with the increase in reservations for third party sites which drives our business and average rate overall net revenue is down after paying the commission fees to sites like booking.com, expedia and travelocity. With the net revenue flat or declining a spiraling effect can occur as the tourism industry goes down in Warren County. Restaurant business goes down with fewer tourists in the County. Retail shopping business goes down with fewer tourists in the County. The Entertainment goes down with fewer tourists in the County. All of which results in lower sales tax and means less revenue for the County. With lower

net revenue the ability of business owners to reinvest and make improvements to their properties goes down all of which is effective employment from construction jobs to suppliers and all the venues that cater to the tourists such as hotels and restaurants in Warren County. I am taking a risk in building a major hotel in the Village of Lake George. I believe that the County should be concerned in the differing rate of development in Warren County compared to the neighboring counties. Room demand throughout the Country has reached an all time high but in Warren County we are seeing a decline in tourism and a reduction in the number of rooms over the last five years. This is one of the few Counties in the Country that not seen major hotel growth. Are neighboring properties have also seen growth in hotels whether it is Saratoga, Essex, or all over. Warren County has actually seen a decline in the number of rooms over the last five years. I am building the first new hotel in Warren County in probably ten years, but I don't know the exact number of years. We should be concerned about it and why its happening when we are on the Interstate with 40,000 cars going by our front door every day. I am passionate about this area but I am concerned and would be happy to share my personal experience and observations, data that I collect a lot of. I have actual numbers from five properties I am involved in. I have actual numbers from al of the restaurants I am involved in. I have actual numbers from the retail sale slips of the stores I am involved in. I cant release this publicly but i can sit down with the Supervisors one on one and show them this data is going and that the STR report is very accurate. I will release this property right here that shows everyday where my occupancy is because i track it everyday. If you want to see other properties they are very similar. My rate is up, I pay bed tax on the same dollars I am paying 15% to Expedia. That is where your increase in bed tax money is coming from. Expedia and these third party sites which we have to have today because that's what generates revenue. We don't get anymore walk in or last minute traffic. I can say at the Marine Village today we don't send people to other hotels like we used to three years ago. The walk in traffic is just not there, it is non-existent because everyone is online and I would love to share some of this information; therefore, I highly recommend having a good study done. I don't know the answers and I think I know enough about tourism. I am not a professional but I operate a lot of properties, I take a lot of risk and I deal with people everyday and I would love to share that information but I do think we really need a professional study. Thank you."

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Ms. Wood and seconded by Mr. Conover, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 11:51 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist
As typed by Sarah McLenithan, Deputy Clerk of the Board